



# Town of Westford Massachusetts

## Town Manager's Newsletter

February 2023



**Kristen Las**  
Town  
Manager

[klas@westfordma.gov](mailto:klas@westfordma.gov)  
[www.westfordma.gov/tm](http://www.westfordma.gov/tm)  
978-692-5500

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**Submission Deadline for  
Nomination Papers for  
town elected offices  
Tuesday, March 14, 5PM**

**Community Gardens  
Plot Application due by  
March 17**

**Saturday, March 25, 10AM  
Annual Town Meeting  
Westford Academy**

**Town Election  
May 2  
Polls open 7AM to 8PM**



Watch  
**westford** CAT  
community access television  
[www.westfordcat.org](http://www.westfordcat.org)

### Dear Westford residents,

It is with great enthusiasm that I issue to you my first newsletter as Westford's Town Manager. I was officially welcomed into the position on January 31, 2023 and have enjoyed the first few weeks in Town. The Select Board, residents and staff have been helpful in my transition to this role. In the next few months, I look forward to meeting more residents and business owners and immersing myself in the culture of Westford. I would like to thank the former Town Manager, Jodi Ross, for her consultation over the past few months since I was selected as Town Manager. She led the Town for over 14 years and has an abundance of institutional knowledge. With this introduction, we will transition into the information portion of the newsletter. If you have any suggestions for added features in the future, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Town Manager's office at (978)-692-5501.

Annual Town Meeting is quickly approaching and will be held on Saturday, March 25<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM in the Westford Academy Gymnasium, 30 Patten Road. At the Select Board's recent meetings, they have voted to close the warrant, set the order, review warrant articles and take positions of recommendations. The board will continue to take position on warrant articles at their upcoming meetings on February 28<sup>th</sup> and March 14<sup>th</sup>. All Town Meeting documents are available at the following link: [2023 Annual Town Meeting](#).

The Select Board has recently switched to holding their regularly scheduled meetings in-person at the Town Hall Meeting Room but with hybrid capabilities so participants may have the ability to attend remotely via Zoom. Please see the beginning of each of their published meeting agendas for this meeting information.

At the Select Board's meeting on February 14<sup>th</sup>, Select Board Chair Peraner-Sweet made a statement regarding the proposed firearms dealer in town and explained that the Board has received many emails from concerned residents and shared town staff are exploring a possible zoning bylaw as quickly as possible. A formal statement was issued from our Police Chief, Mark Chambers, Director of Land Use Management, Jeff Morrisette, and myself which is available to view at the following link: [Statement Regarding Firearms Dealer in Westford](#).

At that same meeting, the Board met jointly with the Board of Water Commissioners and Finance Committee to discuss the Fiscal Year 2024 proposed water rate increase. After discussion, the Board asked the Board of Water Commissioners and Water Department to prepare additional documentation and return to a future meeting for further discussion on the proposed increase.

Furthermore, the Board met jointly with the Finance Committee to discuss various options for the Cameron Senior Center HVAC Project presented by Chris Karpinsky, Permanent Town Building Committee, Jeff Goodwin, Facilities Director, and Alicia Monks, CHA Consulting, Inc. Ultimately the Board requested more information after bids have been received at their meeting on March 14<sup>th</sup>.

(Continued on next page)

[WWW.WESTFORDMA.GOV](http://WWW.WESTFORDMA.GOV)

As a result of being awarded MassDEP grant funding for a Pay-As-You-Throw Program for solid waste and recycling, Assistant Town Manager, Eric Heideman, Finance Director, Dan O'Donnell, and Chair of the Recycling Commission, Ken Teal, presented the Select Board possible options for implementation. After consideration the Board instructed the town staff to return the grant due to the tight timeline for funds to be expended by. The discussion will be continued to a future board meeting to discuss next steps and a proposed timeline to further study the program.

Department of Public Works Director, Steve Cronin, has shared an update on the Beaver Brook Bridge Project, stating the construction should be completed by September 2023. To follow updates from our DPW regarding the project and others in town, you may follow their Facebook at the following link: [Westford Public Works Facebook](#).

The Select Board and I most recently recognized the Westford Academy sports teams who won Dual County League Championships for the 2022-2023 season. This included: Boys Cross Country, Football, Golf, Boys Basketball, Gymnastics, Girls Indoor Track and Field, Boys Swim and Dive, and Girls Swim and Dive. Congratulations to all the students for their hard work and dedication! Additionally, the Boys and Girls Swim and Dive Teams had the Division 1 State Championship last weekend at MIT where the Boys received Division 1 State Champions and Girls received Division 1 State Champion Runner-Ups! Way to go!

At the Select Board's January 24<sup>th</sup> meeting, the board was presented a request from the Pedestrian Safety Committee to consider M.G.L. c. 90 §17C which establishes a 25 miles per-hour speed limit in accordance with the 2022 Annual Town Meeting approval for 33 Main Street to approximately 117 Main Street, 30 West Prescott Street to approximately 25 Pleasant Street, and Patten Road. The board voted unanimously to approve this request.

National Grid has begun trimming and pruning trees and wooded vegetation in the town's right-of-way, along circuit 57L1, as part of their 2022 Vegetation Management Plan. A goal of this plan is to ensure reliable delivery of electric service to National Grid customers. Work will be conducted around overhead wires on the following roads: Concord Road (Littleton Road to 74 Concord Road, and Littleton Road to Powers Road), Flagg Road (Kelly Road to 21 Flagg Road, Hildreth Street (Concord Road to Dove Lane), Wright Land, Phillips Drive, and Howard Road. For more information, you may visit the following link: [National Grid Trimming and Pruning Trees and Woody Vegetation](#).

Don't forget to sign up for Rave/Smart911 Emergency Notifications to receive alerts regarding school/town office closings and delays, trash/recycling collection delays, and more directly to your phone or email. If a child is missing, a hurricane or tornado is approaching, a break-in occurs, or general message needs to be sent to the community, this is the most efficient way the town can send quick and accurate information to residents. To find out more information and to sign up for this notification, you may visit the following link: [Smart911](#).

I would like to remind town residents and visitors of the Winter Parking Ban in accordance with c. 199 §23 of the Westford Town Code, there is no on-street parking longer than one hour between 1:00 AM and 8:00 AM from November 1st to April 1st. There is to be no on-street parking of any kind during a snowstorm or following a storm while cleanup is taking place. The Public Works Department's heavy equipment operators and we greatly appreciate your efforts in keeping your property safe, and allowing our drivers to more easily be able to maneuver our large sanders and plows down our narrow roads.

Free sand for snow and ice treatment is available to Westford residents and may be picked up at the entrance of the old Highway Garage located at 30 Beacon Street. There is a five-gallon limit and you must bring a bucket and shovel. If you are elderly or disabled and cannot pick up yourself, you may call our Cameron Senior Center at (978) 692-5523 to coordinate a delivery from our Police Department.

(Continued on next page)



As a reminder, nomination papers for our local elected offices are available at the Town Clerk's Office and the submission deadline is on Tuesday, March 14<sup>th</sup>, at 5:00 PM. Our election will be held on Tuesday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>.

There are several openings on our local boards and committees, including: 35 Town Farm Road Task Force, Affordable Housing Trust, Agricultural Commission, Bylaw Review Committee, Capital Planning Committee, Commission on Disability, Cultural Council, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, Dog Park Task Force, Economic Development Committee, Election Officer, Healthy Westford Committee, Housing Authority, Parks and Recreation Commission, Permanent Town Building Committee, Scholarship and Grant Committee, Senior Low Income Disabled Tax Relief Committee, and Tax Possession Sale Committee. I urge you to peruse our website for information about the work of these committees; and if you have interest, please complete and submit a Citizen's Activity form at this link: [Citizen Activity Form](#).

Would you like more detailed information on the Select Board's meetings? Click the following links to access: [Select Board Documents](#) & [Select Board Meeting Videos](#).

Sincerely,

*Kristen D. Las*

Kristen Las



*On Sunday, February 5th the Westford Police Department Community Event Team hosted it's second annual learn to skate program at the Stony Brook Middle School. Lt. Gendron, Sgt. Hughes, Det. Bernadin, Ofc. Silton, Ofc. Jansen, Ofc. Bunyon, and Ofc. Antonelli were all thrilled to take part in helping some members of the community work on their skating skills and techniques.*

*Thank you to all who supported the WPD in this endeavor.*

## **Westford Public Schools**

As February is our shortest month, this update shall be in kind.

Westford Public Schools is currently conducting a feasibility study with the design firm SMMA to develop a new District Master Plan to identify facility and educational needs for the next ten years. On March 9, 2023, they are going to be facilitating a hybrid discussion allowing both in person and remote access for participation and will be open to our entire community. This feedback session is designed to gather input and feedback from stakeholders as to the grade configurations and the geographic assignment of students at our elementary schools as well as the transitions between schools within our district. During the [January 30th School Committee meeting](#), the project team leaders from SMMA gave an update presentation to provide examples as to what types of data and information will be included in their final study report towards the end of the year. They presented a brief overview of how they assess the buildings and gave the School Committee an example of some of the information that will be included in their final report. The current collection of data from all of the completed building tours is nearly 500 pages long. It might be helpful to watch that presentation on the [WestfordCAT](#) YouTube channel to gather additional context prior to this upcoming feedback session.

This event will take place both in person at the Stony Brook School Auditorium as well as remotely via a Zoom Webinar.

Topic: WPS Master Plan Feasibility Study Community Discussion and Feedback Session  
When: Mar 9, 2023 07:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

If you prefer to participate remotely, please register in advance using this link:  
[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_CnfZmVqqQnS151Nr8orFpA](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_CnfZmVqqQnS151Nr8orFpA)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

Cheers,

Chris

Christopher Chew, Ed. D  
Superintendent  
Westford Public Schools





## **Town Clerk's Corner**

### **Nomination Papers are available at the Town Clerk's Office.**

Thinking of getting involved and running for office? All nomination papers must be returned with the signatures of 50 registered Westford voters by Tuesday, March 14<sup>th</sup>.

### **Dates to remember.**

Town Meeting: March 25, 2023, 10 am at Westford Academy gymnasium

Town Election: May 2, 2023 (polls open 7:00 am-8:00 pm)

### **Deadline to license your dog(s)**

Dogs must be licensed by March 31, 2023 to avoid the \$25.00 late fee. Spayed or neutered dogs are \$15.00. Non altered dogs are \$20.00.

**A reminder** - We have a drop box for ballots, dog license requests, census forms and any other items for the Town Clerk's Office. It is located at the back door to Town Hall on the sidewalk leading to the Police Station. Access is available 24 hours a day. The box is securely locked and tamperproof.

### **Not registered as a voter in Westford yet?**

It's easier than ever ... just go online!

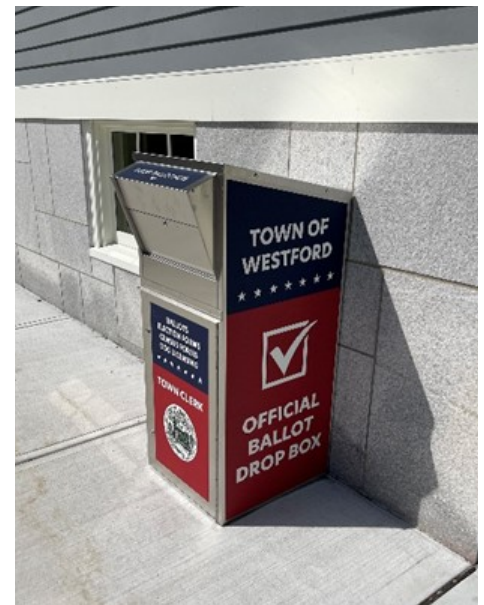
<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/>



### **When you register to vote, you may**

- Register in a POLITICAL PARTY by selecting one of the listed parties (currently Democratic, Libertarian and Republican) OR
- Register in a political designation, OR
- Register with no party affiliation by selecting "NO PARTY (unenrolled)," which is commonly referred to as "independent" meaning that you do not have a party designation

If you do not enroll in a party (i.e., choose unenrolled or a political designation), you may still vote in state and presidential primaries by choosing a party ballot and will remain unenrolled. If you enroll in one of the parties listed above, you may vote only in that party's primary. In a general election, all voters receive the same ballot regardless of party enrollment.



## **Sustainability** – Sue Thomas, [Sustainability Coordinator](#), 978-399-2798

### **The Groundhog is wrong, spring is at least 3 weeks early this year!**

It isn't your imagination. Westford's wild weather swings this year are unusual, and you aren't alone if your spring flowers are blooming, or you have noticed that wildlife seem unusually frisky for February. The entire East Coast is experiencing an [early spring](#). See the resources at the bottom of this page to formulate your decarbonization plan, or contact me.

### **Thinking about new construction?**

The [new stretch energy code](#) in force in Westford includes a [Passive House](#) path for all structures. Learn more about the code and [how homes are already staying warm, even without furnaces, north of us, in Maine](#).

### **Ready to learn how you can decarbonize your home?**

Attend [the Zero Carbon Home Webinar](#), and read [this case study by a Westford resident](#) and consult the resources listed at the bottom of this article.

### **Curious about Lithium? Learn more about domestic production [here](#).**

This new Washington Post column is a great one to follow. After reading it, check out the activities going on right here in Westford.

### **Thinking about your health during heart month?**

[Plan to plant a tree or two](#). This article relates how a U.S. Forest Service Study shows people who live with or near tree canopies live longer, healthier lives. [The Westford Tree and Invasive Species plan](#) will be wrapping up soon and Westford will be looking to more of you to help plant trees!

### **Planning your spring planting?**

This is the time of year, usually as snow blankets our yards, that gardeners get busy planning and seed starting. It is also a great time to reconsider your lawn and your lawn maintenance habits. Check out some classes and preorder plants from the [Native Plant Trust](#), supplement your home compost with [Westford Community Compost](#) produced from food waste at Westford Academy, and consider local producers of organic seedlings, or seeds from organic, heritage breeds (to diversify the food supply and your yields) or seed savers, both wild and domesticated.

### **Resources for reducing your carbon footprint in 2023**

**Home:** [Mass Save](#), [Energy.gov](#), [the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center](#), [Westford Pop](#), [HeatSmart Alliance](#)

**Transportation:** [Green Energy Consumers Alliance](#)

**Solid Waste (trash, recycling and composting):** [Westford Recycling Commission](#), [Recycle Smart](#)

**Tax Considerations:** [IRS](#). Incentives and tax credits are usually "stackable" meaning you can claim them all, and generally people are eligible for greater discounts in lower income brackets, as the most recent legislation at both the federal and state levels places a priority on equity.

**General Westford Resources:** [Westford's Climate Roadmap](#), [Clean Energy and Sustainability website](#), [Sustainability](#), [Westford Climate Action](#)

## February - March at the J.V. Fletcher Library

Unless otherwise noted, the following programs are made possible by the Friends of the Library.



**Director's Corner:** 10 Massachusetts Libraries slated for Library Construction Grants — representing communities from across the Commonwealth — make an urgent appeal to Legislators and the Board of Library Commissioners for an additional one-time \$26 million to assist library projects saying.... "We emphasize that investing in a single library facility does not equal a single community's benefit; rather, all libraries across the Commonwealth engage in mutual assistance, sharing collections, patrons and buildings. Every new library is a benefit to the citizenry of the entire Commonwealth. We ask you to invest in the future of this citizenry, and in the greater commonwealth." Appealing libraries are: Amherst, Brewster, Deerfield, Fitchburg, Gloucester, Lynnfield, Orange, Sharon Swansea and Westford.

**VIRTUAL JOB SEARCH HELP FOR 50 & OVER – JOB SEARCH HELP FOR 50 & OVER – Developing a Resume – Part I:** Wed., March 1, 9:30a.m to 11:30a.m.. The Massachusetts Library Collaborative's 50+ Job Seekers Group meets on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month, from 9:30am to 11:30am and 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays of the month from 6pm to 8pm, via Zoom. If you are unemployed and actively looking, underemployed, seeking a new career direction, re-entering the job market after a long employment gap, or recently retired and looking for your "Encore Career", this networking group program is perfect for you! [Register here.](#)

**Pajama Story Time: Mon., February 27 at 6:30 p.m.** Pajama Time meets once a month on a Monday evening in the Meeting Room for children ages 3 to 7. Get into those pajamas and grab a favorite stuffed animal or blanket and come on in!

**Animanga Club: Thursday, March 2, 6:30-7:30 p.m.**

Join us in the Meeting Room on the first Thursday of the month at 6:30. We will talk manga, browse the newest selections, watch anime on the library's Crunchyroll account, eat snacks and draw characters. Feel free to bring your favorite Squishie to keep us company! For Grade 6 and up. Registration is very helpful but drop-ins are always welcome! [Register here.](#)

**Lego Club: Saturday, March 4 at 2:00 p.m.** Do you love to build with Legos®? Come to our Lego® Club each month to create something fun with Library Legos. This program is best for any child who will not eat the Legos and takes place in the Meeting Room. Parents stay and join in the fun or visit with other parents in the room. Drop-in; no registration is necessary.

**Adult Non Fiction Book Club: Tuesday, March 7 at 7:00 p.m.** We'll meet in the downstairs Meeting Room to discuss *Energy: a Human History* by Richard Rhodes. **Copies are available at Main Desk. Email Charles Schweppe at [cschweppe@westfordma.gov](mailto:cschweppe@westfordma.gov) for details!**

**Virtual Travels Through Ireland: Monday, March 13 at 7:00 p.m.:** Just in time for St. Patrick's Day, join us on **Zoom** for a trip to Ireland. Loaded with exciting pictures, videos, and historical information, Dana Zaiser's presentation will focus on his 2017 "Castles and Manors" trip to Ireland. Sharing his extensive knowledge, Dana will offer many humorous stories from multiple travels. His plan is to transport attendees, through this presentation, to the Emerald Isle. The visit includes stops at the Rock of Cashel, Ring of Kerry, Kylemore Abbey, Phoenix Park, and the Irish Potato Famine Museum, among others. And what trip to Ireland would be complete without a tour of the Guinness brewery. Erin go Bragh! [Register here.](#)

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## **February - March at the J.V. Fletcher Library (continued)**

**Mother Goose: Mondays and Thursdays at 10:30 a.m.** Mother Goose is an early literacy interactive story time. Children and their caregivers join us in the Meeting Room for this drop in program.

### **SMALL GROUP STORY TIME PROGRAMS:**

**ABC and Me, Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m.** is an early literacy story time for preschoolers aged 2 to 4 years old. Kids attend with their adults.

**ABC and Me, Tuesdays at 1:15 p.m.** is an early literacy story time for older preschoolers ages 3 to 5. Younger kids attend with their adults; you decide for older kids.

**Wiggle Words, Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m.** is an early literacy story time for preschoolers aged 2 to 4 years old. Kids attend with their adults.

**MBLC and Bruins PJ Drive:** The J.V. Fletcher Library has once again teamed up with the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners and the Boston Bruins to participate in their annual pajama drive to benefit DCF Kids and Cradles to Crayons. The PJ Drive's goal is to collect new pajamas for children and teens in need. The PJ Drive runs from Feb.1 through March 15, 2023. The library will be collecting new pairs of pajamas from size 0-3 months through adult size medium. The drop off bin is located next to the Main Desk.

**Friends of the Library e-newsletter:** The best way to learn about our upcoming programs and new services is through the FOL weekly e-newsletter. [Sign up here.](#)

Check out our [Museum Passes page](#) or call the Library for reservations. Unless otherwise noted, our museum passes are generously funded by the Friends of the Library. [Have you joined the Friends yet?](#)

### **Quick Links to Our Most Popular Services!**

[Programs – Adults](#)  
[Programs – Kids](#)  
[Programs – Young Adults](#)

**If you have questions or need assistance, please call us at 978-399-2300 or send us an email at [westfordlibrary@westfordma.gov](mailto:westfordlibrary@westfordma.gov).**





## Westford Community Gardens

Have a green thumb? Want to grow and eat your own organic produce? Are you seeking a community of gardeners? The Westford Community Garden (located at 40 Graniteville Rd) is now accepting applications for the 2023 growing season!



More information regarding the application process, plot sizes, and fees is available at [www.westfordcommunitygardens.org](http://www.westfordcommunitygardens.org).

Plot applications are due by **March 17th, 2023!**

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## Westford Recycling Commission

### APRIL 2023 EVENTS

All events are held at the Westford Highway Garage, 28 North St.  
For details, please see [www.westfordma.gov/recycling](http://www.westfordma.gov/recycling)

**April 15 – Household Hazardous Waste. 8 am – 2 pm.**

**April 22 - Brush Chipping. 10:30 am – 4:30 pm.**

**April 29 – Electronics & More. 9 am – 1 pm.**



**Recycle Smart:** Use Recycle Smart's Smart Recycling Guide (<https://recyclesmartma.org>) and the Recyclopedia to make sure you're putting the right stuff in your recycling bin. These tools were created by MassDEP and MRF operators to help reduce confusion and "wish-cycling," and to ensure our efforts to separate trash from recycling aren't made in vain.

## Cameron Senior Center

*Just a glimpse of our many  
offerings at the Cameron  
for adults age 55+*

### **Don't Forget Dementia Caregiver Support Group**

**February 26<sup>th</sup> at 6PM**

Joanne Fontaine, RN and Lisa Sobhian, LICSW, both very experienced in running grief groups with the Alzheimer's Association. Joanne is a Geriatric Case Manager, owner of Pro-Active Eldercare and Lisa is an Alzheimer's Specialist and Director of D'Youville Life and Wellness Community. All are invited but we require you call the facilitator before attending the first meeting at the Cameron.

### **Holi Celebration**

**Wednesday, March 8<sup>th</sup> at noon**

We are excited to celebrate the Hindu Spring festival with fun fellowship, a multicultural meal and special craft that is reflective of this brightly colored celebration. Please wear bright colors for this happy celebratory program. RSVP to 978-692-5523

Special thanks to the Friends of the Cameron for helping financially to underwrite this program.

### **Boiled Dinner**

**Friday, March 17<sup>th</sup> at noon**

A sure hit of good luck and food with the culinary students at Nashoba Tech Culinary Arts Program preparing and serving this festive meal. Katie wanted to remind you to please wear green if you want to try your luck at a prize. Cost-\$10

A special thanks to the Friends of the Cameron for helping underwrite the cost of this meal.

### **Men's Breakfast**

**Monday, March 13<sup>th</sup> at 8AM**

Come enjoy a homemade breakfast spread prepared by our long-time inhouse chefs: Marcel Iacombe, Bob Benoit, John Lasna and Dave Anderson. Enjoy eggs, bacon, sausage, potatoes, baked beans, pastry, juice and coffee.

### **Speaker: Will Naser, Principal Assessor**

**Topic:** Municipal Assessment and Real Estate Appraisal Practices. Value assessment can be a mysterious and unknown. The presentation will cover value types, assessment valuing vs bank appraisal valuing, the three methods or approaches used in R/E appraisal world, In addition he will go over the current values and tax assessment for the Town of Westford. Cost: \$4 RSVP to 978-692-5523

### **Women's Brunch**

**Wednesday, March 15<sup>th</sup> at noon**

Come hear our favorite health department nurse, Gail Johnson speaks on the importance of our mental health. Cost:\$4 and please RSVP to 978-692-5523

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## **Cameron Senior Center (continued)**

### **MassHealth Changes**

In March 2020, the federal government declared a public health emergency (PHE) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to the PHE and consistent with federal continuous coverage requirements, MassHealth put protections in place that prevented members' MassHealth coverage ending during the COVID-19 emergency. The federal government has decided to end the continuous coverage requirements. In response to this decision, MassHealth will return to standard annual eligibility renewal processes. Starting April 1, 2023, all current MassHealth members will need to renew their health coverage to ensure they still qualify for their current benefit. These renewals will take place over 12 months.

#### **What MassHealth Members need to know....**

1. Update your contact information. Make sure MassHealth has your most up to date address, phone number, and email so you do not miss valuable information and notices from MassHealth.
2. Report any household changes. These include a new job, address, changes to your income, disability status, or pregnancy. MassHealth wants to make sure we have the latest information for you and all members of your household, so you get the best benefit you qualify for.
3. Create an MA Login Account. An MA Login Account is the fastest way to renew your MassHealth and Health Connector coverage, update your information, and report changes to your household. Current members under the age of 65 can create an account by following the link provided on the back of your MassHealth notices or by visiting [mass.gov/masshealthlogin](https://mass.gov/masshealthlogin).
4. Read all mail from MassHealth. MassHealth will mail you information about your health benefit that may require you to take action to keep your current coverage.

### **Best of Times Trip features: Emmett Cahill St. Patrick's Day**

**Wednesday, March 8<sup>th</sup>**

Travel on a luxury coach bus to Danvers, MA. for an incredible St. Patrick's Day celebration with Emmette Cahill, Ireland's most exciting young tenor and star of PBS Phenomenon Celtic Thunder. Lunch will include a plated dinner your choice of either Corned beef and cabbage or Baked Scrod. Cost and ALL gratuities included in cost of \$124.

To learn more about the Cameron Senior Center programs and services please visit:

[www.westfordma.gov/coa](http://www.westfordma.gov/coa), [www.facebook.com/Cameron Senior Center/](https://www.facebook.com/Cameron-Senior-Center/)

[www.youtube.com/channel/](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCaNgAZb3tw8EYYQ5bEe7XXg)

[UCaNgAZb3tw8EYYQ5bEe7XXg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCaNgAZb3tw8EYYQ5bEe7XXg) or call 978-692-5523

**To view the complete Council On Aging Newsletter  
please visit our website:**

[www.westfordma.gov/coa](http://www.westfordma.gov/coa) and click on **Newsletters**.



Westford Senior Center



## Community Wellness

### National Maternal Mental Health Hotline

The National Maternal Mental Health Hotline provides 24/7, free, confidential support, resources and referrals to any pregnant and postpartum mothers facing mental health challenges and their loved ones. The service is available via phone and text in English or Spanish. Interpreter services are available in 60 languages.

Pregnancy and a new baby can bring a range of emotions. In fact, many women feel overwhelmed, sad, or anxious at different times during their pregnancy and even after the baby is born. For many women, these feelings go away on their own. But for some women, these emotions are more serious and may stay for months.

The National Maternal Mental Health Hotline's counselors provide real-time emotional support, encouragement, information, and referrals. Pregnant and postpartum women can get the help and resources they need when they need it.

Are you a new parent and feeling sad, worried, overwhelmed, or concerned that you aren't good enough? You aren't alone. You aren't to blame. With help, you can feel better. **Call or text, 1-833-9-HELP4MOMS (1-833-943-5746)** to connect with counselors at the National Maternal Mental Health Hotline. Learn more at [www.MCHB.HRSA.gov/national-maternal-mental-health-hotline](http://www.MCHB.HRSA.gov/national-maternal-mental-health-hotline)

### Massachusetts Behavioral Health Help Line

The Massachusetts Behavioral Health Help Line (BHHL) is here to connect you directly to clinical help, when and where you need it. Even if you're not sure what kind of help or treatment you may need, they can help guide you.

- The Behavioral Health Help Line is a free, confidential service of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, operated by the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership (MBHP).
- The Behavioral Health Help Line (BHHL) connects individuals and families to the full range of treatment services for mental health and substance use offered in Massachusetts, including outpatient, urgent, and immediate crisis care. Call for real-time support, initial clinical assessment, and connection to the right evaluation and treatment. Real-time interpretation in 200+ languages. Deaf or hard of hearing? Contact MassRelay at 711
- The BHHL connects people to treatment in their community, including one of the new Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHCs) across the state. The BHHL uses a comprehensive directory of mental health and substance use treatment providers.
- The BHHL is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year by phone call and text at **833-773-2445** (BHHL), and online chat at [masshelpline.com](http://masshelpline.com). The BHHL connects callers to 911 when needed for immediate safety. You can also visit the local Community Behavioral Health Center (CBHCs) in your area for crisis intervention, VINFEN. [www.vinfen.org/cbhc](http://www.vinfen.org/cbhc)

For more information about the Community Wellness Department, please visit <https://www.westfordma.gov/1487/Community-Wellness>

Nicole Laviolette, Community Wellness Coordinator

978-399-2503

[nlaviolette@westfordma.gov](mailto:nlaviolette@westfordma.gov)

## Health Department

JOIN US FOR THE UPCOMING FREE

# YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING

## MIDDLESEX COUNTY

### WHAT IS YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID?

The Youth Mental Health First Aid training teaches adults how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges among children and adolescents from ages 12-18



### HOW IS THIS TRAINING BENEFICIAL?

1. Informs adults about common mental health concerns among youth
2. Helps reduce stigma
3. Helps adults recognize common signs and symptoms of mental health and substance misuse challenges beyond "typical" teen behavior
4. Provides guidance with a simple 5-step action plan (ALGEE) how to properly and safely respond to these challenges

### WHO SHOULD KNOW AND BE INVOLVED?

- Parents
- Educators
- All community members

### WHEN & WHERE?

**Date & Time:** March 15, 2023 from 9am-4pm

**Location:** Westford Fire Department  
65 Boston Road  
Westford, MA 01886



Interested in attending?  
Please contact Brittany Nash for registration

 [bnash@westfordma.gov](mailto:bnash@westfordma.gov)



Health Department (continued)

Mind &  
Every Body  
Practice



HELLO,

MY NAME IS BRITTANY NASH  
THE REGIONAL COMMUNITY  
HEALTH AND WELLNESS  
COORDINATOR FOR THE  
NORTHWEST COALITION  
(WESTFORD,  
ACTON, LOWELL, AND DRACUT  
HEALTH DEPARTMENTS)

COME PRACTICE

1. SETTING INTENTIONS
2. LIGHT STRETCHING
3. BREATHING TECHNIQUES
4. RELAXATION &  
MINDFULNESS

**Date:** March 17th  
**FREE BI-WEEKLY PROGRAM**

**TIME:** 10 AM - 11 AM

**LOCATION:**  
ACTON MEMORIAL LIBRARY  
MEETING ROOM  
486 MAIN STREET  
ACTON, MA, 01720

NO EQUIPMENT REQUIRED  
YOGA MATTS/PROPS ARE  
OPTIONAL

INHALE

Exhale

REGISTER ON:

[HTTPS://  
ACTONMEMORIAL-  
LIBRARY.ASSABETINTERACTIVE.COM/  
CALENDAR/BREATHE-FOR-CHANGE-3/](https://actonmemorial-library.assabetinteractive.com/calendar/breathe-for-change-3/)



## Health Department (continued)

# Stress Less for a Healthier Heart



**Stress happens. You can't always prevent or avoid it. But you can change how you respond to it. Try these tips. You may feel better—and have a healthier heart, too!**

## Know How Stress Affects Your Body

Whether it's from everyday deadlines, the work-life balancing act, or financial struggles, stress shows up often. Your body reacts to it. Your heart rate increases, your blood vessels narrow—and especially over the long term that's not healthy! Research shows that stress can make us more likely to get heart disease and have a heart attack.

The origins of heart disease begin at a young age, so the earlier in life you learn how to de-stress, the happier you and your heart will be.

Ongoing stress acts on more than just your heart. It affects everything from your nervous system and hormones to your lungs and gut. You may not see the connection, and healthcare providers may not ask about your stress. So try to listen to your body while thinking about what's going on in your life.

## Turn On Your Relaxation Response

Did you know your body also has a relaxation response? Your breathing slows and **blood pressure** and heart rate decrease. The good news is you can trigger that response.

Ways to do so often combine breathing deeply and focusing your attention on pleasing thoughts and images.

Here are a few relaxation response techniques to try. You can do these on your own or find a teacher or class to start. They may take some practice!

### Progressive muscle relaxation

**This approach** calls for tightening individual muscles in your body and then releasing the tension. Start by tensing and relaxing your toes, then your calves, and on up to your face. Do one muscle group at a time.



### Meditation

This is one of the most-studied approaches for handling stress. There are a variety of ways to do it, including through **mindfulness meditation**. Most meditation styles involve:

- Being in a quiet location with as few distractions as possible
- Being physically comfortable either sitting, lying, or walking
- Focusing your attention on a specific word or set of words, an object, or your breathing
- Having an open attitude and letting distractions, including thoughts, come and go without judgment



**Continued on next page**

## Health Department (continued)

### Stress Less for a Healthier Heart (Continued)

#### Guided imagery

This involves a series of steps that include relaxing and visualizing the details of a calm, peaceful setting, such as a garden. Learn more about stress and try a [guided imagery session](#).



#### Deep breathing

This is something you can do anytime, anywhere. Take in a slow, deep breath, let your stomach or chest expand, then exhale slowly. Repeat a few times.



### Find Your Way to Healthy Relaxing

There's no one way to control stress. You may want to try a stress management program, do yoga, talk to a professional counselor, take an art class, or join friends for a brisk walk. Being in nature is very soothing for some people.

**If you're short on time, make a list of three-minute activities you love. Add one to each day of your calendar. Consider:**

- Listening to a favorite tune during lunch
- Stretching after a warm shower
- Catching a few minutes of the sunrise or sunset



Finding healthy relaxation exercises is just one way to protect your heart. Combine de-stressing with other [heart-healthy habits](#): eat nutritious foods, move your body more and exercise, get enough sleep, and develop a strong social support system.

### Know When It's More Than Just Stress

If you're feeling overwhelmed and unable to cope, are using drugs or alcohol more frequently, or are having suicidal thoughts, [seek professional help right away](#). Resources are available from the [National Institute of Mental Health](#).



[www.hearttruth.gov](http://www.hearttruth.gov)

## 2023 Spring Community Rain Barrel Program

Spring is coming, and the Westford Water Department is pleased to partner once again with The Great American Rain Barrel Company to provide a community rain barrel program. Rain barrels can be purchased online at a discounted price. Visit the Great American Rain Barrel Company website at [www.greatamericanrainbarrel.com/community/westford](http://www.greatamericanrainbarrel.com/community/westford) (this link is also available on the Water Department website at [www.westfordma.gov/water](http://www.westfordma.gov/water)).

***The deadline for purchasing a rain barrel is May 15<sup>th</sup> at midnight. Order pickup is at the Water Department - 60 Forge Village Road on Wednesday May 24<sup>th</sup> between 4 and 6 pm.***

Rain barrels are a great way to harness a natural source of water, and provide many benefits including:

- **Provide an alternate source of water during droughts**
- **Chlorine-free water source for plants and gardens**
- **Improves residential storm water management**
- **Slow pollution from runoff**
- **Lower municipal water demand**

These rain barrels are 100% re-purposed food grade, UV protected, and BPA free barrels produced in Massachusetts, and come in several colors including Forest Green, Earth Brown, Nantucket Grey, and unpainted. Several barrels can be linked together with easy setup.

Last year's program was a great success with 54 rain barrels sold at a discounted community price - our best year yet!

